

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A column hole cover interposed between a circumferential portion of an aperture of a column hole formed at an instrument panel for insertion of a steering column therethrough and a steering gear box capable of being displaced in a predetermined direction, the column hole cover comprising:

a cylindrical main body extended in the predetermined direction,

10 the main body including a first annular end portion directly or indirectly fixed to the steering gear box, a second annular end portion, and an intermediate portion between the first and second end portions,

the second end portion including an annular seal,

15 the intermediate portion including an expandable/contractible portion capable of being elastically expanded or contracted in the predetermined direction,

wherein, irrespective of the displacement of the steering gear box, the annular seal is maintained in an elastic pressure contact against the circumferential portion of the aperture of the instrument panel by a reaction force of the compressed expandable/contractible portion.

25 2. A column hole cover according to Claim 1, wherein

the annular seal is slidably movable along the circumferential portion of the aperture of the instrument panel in association with the displacement of the steering gear box.

- 5 3. A column hole cover according to Claim 1, wherein the maximum compressible amount of the expandable/contractible portion is designed to be greater than the maximum displacement of the steering gear box.
- 10 4. A column hole cover according to Claim 3, wherein the expandable/contractible portion has a predetermined amount of compression when the steering gear box is located farthest away from the circumferential portion of the aperture of the instrument panel.
- 15 5. A column hole cover according to Claim 1, the annular seal including an annular flange, the annular flange including a confronting face in face-to-face relation with the circumferential portion of the aperture of the instrument panel,
- 20 the confronting face of the annular flange including at least one annular seal lip.
6. A column hole cover according to Claim 5, the annular flange including an outside circumference portion relatively reduced in thickness.
- 25 7. A column hole cover according to Claim 6,

the at least one annular seal lip including a plurality of annular seal lips arranged in a concentric relation,

the confronting face of the annular flange including a plurality of ribs extended radially as intersecting the plural annular seal lips.

8. A column hole cover according to Claim 1,

wherein the annular seal has a portion capable of slidably contacting the circumferential portion of the aperture of the instrument panel, and is covered with a coat at the slidably contacting portion thereof, the coat containing a low-friction material.

9. A column hole cover according to Claim 8,

wherein the coat contains a silicone resin.

10. A column hole cover according to Claim 1,

wherein the annular seal includes a skirt portion, an outside circumference of which is inclined relative to a plane orthogonal to an axis along the predetermined direction.

11. A column hole cover according to Claim 1,

wherein the expandable/contractible portion includes a bellows.

12. A column hole cover according to Claim 1,

wherein a material forming the main body contains a rubber.

13. A column hole cover according to Claim 13,
wherein the rubber includes an
ethylene-propylene-diene rubber.
14. A column hole cover according to Claim 13,
5 wherein the rubber includes a chloroprene rubber.
15. A column hole cover according to Claim 1, further
comprising an cylindrical spacer interposed between the
steering gear box and the first end portion of the main
body, the spacer fixed to the steering gear box and the
10 first end portion of the main body.